

Maduro's Use of Violence for Political Control

Antonio De La Cruz

Executive Director

24/Jul/2023

This article examines the Maduro regime's systematic use of violence and intimidation to maintain political control in Venezuela. Drawing on reports from international organizations and recent developments, it highlights the regime's efforts to neutralize opposition figures, isolate Venezuela from critical allies, and undermine democratic processes. The article analyzes the implications of these actions for both the domestic and international spheres, emphasizing the need for continued alignment among democratic forces and the international community to address the crisis effectively.

Introduction

During a military promotion ceremony on July 4th, Nicolás Maduro accused the opposition of planning to incite violence and intolerance through the resurgence of protests known as “guarimbas”. He further directed the Minister of Defense to utilize the National Bolivarian Armed Forces in response to the opposition to what he referred to as fascism, coup attempts, and imperialism. However, it is important to recognize that the Maduro regime has consistently employed violence and intimidation tactics to suppress political dissent and maintain control since coming to power.

Systematic Use of Violence

Various reports, such as the 2022 Independent International Fact-Finding Mission by the United Nations and the 2018 Independent Panel of Experts by the Organization of American States, have documented severe human rights violations, extrajudicial executions, and repression perpetrated by security forces and paramilitary groups. Moreover, on June 27th, 2023, the International Criminal Court judges requested reopening the Prosecutor's investigation into alleged crimes against humanity, further underlining the regime's record of violence.

Neutralizing Opposition Figures

Banning opposition candidate María Corina Machado by the General Comptroller's Office is a clear example of the Maduro regime's strategy to neutralize credible threats to his re-election in 2024. This action can be characterized as state terrorism, aiming to silence dissent and undermine democratic processes.

International Condemnation

The recent condemnation by 88% of Members of the European Parliament regarding the disqualification of opposition candidates participating in primary elections demonstrates growing international concern. The European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, issued an official statement denouncing Maduro's regime for impeding the return of democracy in Venezuela and violating democratic values and the rights of the Venezuelan people. This condemnation can isolate the Venezuelan government, which has relied on European support to counterbalance U.S. efforts to restore democracy.

The Importance of Democratic Alignment

The United States and the European Union advocate for a resolution to the Venezuelan crisis through democratic elections acceptable to the international community and the Venezuelan people. To this end, the Maduro regime must reevaluate its strategy of disqualifying opposition candidates to avoid international sanctions like those imposed on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine.

The Elimination of Primaries and Political Division

The continued violent actions of the Venezuelan regime could lead to the elimination of the primary elections, further isolating Miraflores from Europe and the United States. In such a scenario, the Maduro regime would likely attempt to delegitimize the primary election process by nullifying the acts of the National Primary Commission, citing a Supreme Court judgment. This strategy guarantees that the candidate, most likely María Corina Machado, lacks the legitimacy necessary to lead the genuine democratic opposition or represent unity in the presidential election.

Conclusion

Maduro's persistent employment of tactics aimed at dividing and weakening the opposition, such as inciting internal conflicts and exploiting ideological differences, clearly indicates the regime's determination to retain control. Nevertheless, the international community and resistance democratic forces must remain united in pursuing a resolution to Venezuela's political crisis. This alignment should prioritize the establishment of fair, free, inclusive, and transparent elections while closely monitoring the situation to uphold democratic values and safeguard the rights of the Venezuelan people.